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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 003385

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TAGS: MARR MOPS PARM PREL MNUC KN KS

SUBJECT: ROKG BRIEFS U.S. OFFICIALS IN ADVANCE OF N-S  
DEFMIN TALKS

Classified By: A/DCM Joseph Y. Yun. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 26 the U.S.- ROK Senior Working Group, consisting of representatives from MOFAT, MND, UNC/CFC/USFK and the Embassy, met for a briefing on the ROK strategy for the November 27-29 North-South Defense Ministerial. The briefing conducted by BG Moon Sung-mook of MND's North Korea Policy Division was candid and detailed. He confirmed that a delegation of 30, led by Defense Minister Kim, would fly to Pyongyang on November 27 for what would be the 2nd North-South Defense Ministerial. General Moon explained that the focus of the talks would be to implement the projects agreed to in the October 2007 North-South Summit Declaration requiring military-to-military cooperation. He pointed to the following five agenda items:

- 1) Establishment of Joint Fishing Waters and Peace Zone and direct access to the North Korean port of Haeju;
- 2) Provision of military assurances for economic projects to include agreement on daily N-S freight rail service, direct air service between Seoul and the Mt. Baekdu tourism area, and joint exploitation of the Han River estuary.
- 3) Implementation of military CBMs, most likely starting with establishment of a hotline between the two defense ministers.
- 4) Reiteration of the importance of making progress on ROK POW/MIAs and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and;
- 5) Scheduling of a 3rd Defense Ministerial Meeting at an appropriate date in 2008.

BG Moon stated that throughout the talks, the ROK delegation would firmly maintain its position on sensitive issues, such as the Northern Limit Line (NLL), combined ROK-U.S. military exercises, and the presence of U.S. forces in Korea. He also assured the U.S. team that DM Kim would urge the DPRK to publicly reconfirm its commitment to implementation of the Six-Party agreements. The briefer left it unclear what rules of engagement would apply to the new Joint Fishing Areas/Peace Zone, but assured the U.S. side that the ROK would consult appropriate U.S. and UNC/CFC authorities anytime potential problems were anticipated or required an appropriate response. The Senior Working Group agreed to meet again to review the outcome of the DEFMIN talks. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) On the morning of November 26, Republic of Korea (ROK) officials from the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) briefed the acting DCM and two general officers from the United Nations Command (UNC), Combined Forces Command (CFC), U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) on the ROK agenda and strategy for the November 27-29 North-South Defense Ministerial Talks. The ROKG agreed to provide the briefing after senior U.S. Government officials had requested at the 15th Security Policy Initiative (SPI-15) and 39th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) that South Korea conduct closer consultations with us in advance of major security-related meetings with the DPRK. The briefing, which was conducted by Brigadier General Moon Sung-mook, head of the North Korea Policy Division of MND, was candid and detailed. (A copy of his classified briefing paper has been emailed to relevant State and OSD officials). Following the briefing, Acting DCM Yun, Major General Frank Panter, UNC/CFC/USFK J-5 Assistant Chief of Staff, Major General John Weida, UNC/USFK Deputy Chief of Staff, and Colonel Kurt Taylor, head of the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNMAC) Secretariat, asked several questions that were answered by General Moon. MND International Policy Bureau DG Song Bong-heon and MOFAT North American Affairs Bureau DG Cho Byung-jae also joined in as the senior participants on the ROK side.

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OVERVIEW  
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¶3. (C) Brigadier General Moon began by confirming that a delegation of 30, led by Minister of National Defense Kim Jang-soo, would fly to Pyongyang on a civilian aircraft the

morning of November 27 (Korea Time) for three days of talks at the Songjeonggak guest house (Note: The facility, located on the shores of the Daedong River, is operated by the Korean People's Army. This is the first time the North Koreans have invited South Koreans to stay there). This will be only the second North-South defense ministerial; the first was held on the South Korean island of Jeju in September 2000. General Moon explained that the main focus of the talks would be to implement the projects agreed to in the October 2007 North-South Summit declaration that require military-to-military cooperation. Moon stated that the following five agenda items would be discussed between the North and South defense ministers:

- 1) Establishment of Joint Fishing Waters and Peace Zone;
- 2) Provision of military assurances for various economic cooperation projects;
- 3) Practical measure(s) for military confidence building;
- 4) Efforts to make progress on ROK POW/MIAs and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and;
- 5) Scheduling of a 3rd Defense Ministerial Meeting at an appropriate date in 2008.

BG Moon stated that throughout the talks, the ROK delegation would firmly maintain its position on sensitive issues, such as the Northern Limit Line (NLL), combined ROK-U.S. military exercises, and the presence of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula.

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JOINT FISHING/PEACE ZONE, ACCESS TO HAEJU  
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¶4. (C) BG Moon said the ROK would reject the DPRK proposal to establish a peace zone and joint fishing area between the NLL and the DPRK's 12 nautical mile line because that would place the area entirely within South Korean waters. Rather, the ROK would propose to establish several joint fishing areas adding up to equal sea areas north of the NLL and south of it. (Comment: The ROK needs to take this approach in order to portray the change to the South Korean public as being fair, to avoid it being viewed as giving away ROK sovereignty over those fishing grounds). If the two sides

are unable to reach an agreement, General Moon said the ROK delegation would propose a joint site survey be conducted before the end of the year.

¶ 15. (C) In keeping with the October 2007 Summit Declaration, the military leaders will discuss measures needed to create a mile-wide "water path" that would allow civilian DPRK vessels to sail directly to/from the North Korean port of Haeju. This is desired by the DPRK because its' vessels currently have to take a long detour to avoid crossing the NLL. To take advantage of the new direct route, however, North Korean vessels would have to accept South Korean procedures for crossing the NLL. Once the North agrees to comply with those procedures, the relevant maritime transportation authorities would go ahead and finalize the details, Moon explained.

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FREIGHT RAIL SERVICE, EXTENDED TRANSIT HOURS  
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¶ 16. (C) Also in keeping with the October 2007 Summit Declaration, North-South freight service via rail would begin on December 11th, General Moon continued. The rail line, which runs between Munsan in the South and Bongdong in the North, was tested successfully in May 2007. All that is required now is for the two militaries to conclude a "supplemental agreement" that would allow for trains to cross the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) once a day. He also predicted that the two sides would agree to extend the transit hours through the Joint Administrative Area (JAA). The new hours will be 0700 to 2200 daily. A new Kaesung tour project slated to start on December 5 is expected to take advantage of these longer hours.

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DIRECT N-S AIR ROUTE  
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¶ 17. (C) During the October 2007 North-South Summit, the two sides tentatively agreed that starting in May 2008 they would institute direct flights between Seoul and Mt. Baekdu for tourism. Because military-to-military assurances are required to make that happen, this issue will also be discussed during the November 27-29 Defense Ministers' Meeting, Moon advised.

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JOINT USE OF HAN RIVER ESTUARY  
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¶ 18. (C) General Moon said that North and South Korea will conduct a joint site survey of the Han River Estuary in December 2007 with collection of aggregates (sand or pebbles added to cement to make concrete) beginning sometime in 2008.

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MILITARY CBMs  
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¶ 19. (C) Defense Minister Kim hopes to obtain concurrence from his North Korean counterpart on the need for confidence building measures (CBMs) and will use the talks to discuss "trial projects," such as the opening of a hotline between the two defense ministers by December 31, 2007. According to Moon, DM Kim also hopes to discuss possible implementation of other CBMs contained in Article 12 of the 1992 North-South Basic Agreement. The ROK would like to reach agreement with the DPRK on creating a Military Joint Committee as a forum for ongoing discussion of CBMs, but Moon explained that North Korea's position is that it will only discuss CBMs after agreement has been reached on what it calls the "Sea Non-aggression Demarcation Line" (by which it means resolution of the NLL issue on North Korean terms).

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POW/MIAs, JOINT EXCAVATION OF WAR REMAINS  
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¶10. (C) General Moon went on to say that the DPRK appeared willing to discuss the joint excavation of Korean War remains, but had taken a strong position that the POW issue had already been concluded. He said that while the ROK delegation expected no headway on the POW issue, it would strongly urge the DPRK to do reopen that discussion because "South Koreans know we still have soldiers in the North," Moon explained.

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF DENUCLEARIZATION  
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¶11. (C) BG Moon assured the U.S. team that Defense Minister Kim would raise the nuclear issue with his North Korean counterpart, and would urge the DPRK to publicly reconfirm its sincere commitment to implementation of the various Six-Party agreements in the statement that would be put out at the conclusion of their talks.

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U.S. QUESTIONS, ROK ANSWERS  
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¶12. (C) Acting DCM Yun, General Panter and General Weida all expressed sincere appreciation for General Moon's candid and detailed briefing and acknowledged that the Senior-Level Working Group format was an ideal forum for sharing this type of security-related information. They then asked a number of questions which the ROK side answered as follows:

-- Asked what the ROK rules of engagement would be in case a DPRK military vessel crossed into the "peace zone" -- a key

concern for the CFC Commander -- General Moon replied that only unarmed "control boats," and no armed military patrol vessels, would be allowed to enter those areas. Asked again what would happen if a DPRK military vessel violated those rules, the ROK officials present would only say that in such an event it would be left to relevant authorities to decide upon an appropriate response.

-- General Moon confirmed that direct transit to Haeju Port could be implemented regardless of agreement on the joint fishing areas. He explained that the ROK would require 3 days notice and the right to approve/disapprove requests from a DPRK vessel wishing to cross the NLL via the water path to/from Haeju Port. The ship would be required to report just before crossing the NLL and to would have to conform to all relevant ROK maritime laws and regulations once it had traveled south of the line.

-- When the U.S. side pointed out that some of the ROK-controlled northwest islands would fall within the peace zone proposed by the DPRK, General Moon responded that while that those islands were recognized in the Armistice as being in the ROK. Therefore, "the ROK delegation would not accept the DPRK proposal, period." He gave the same response when it was pointed out that the DPRK stance on the Han River Estuary ignored the fact that the area was specifically included in the Armistice Agreement. "The ROK will not accept that DPRK proposal either," he said, "period." He added that if in the course of North-South military discussions any potential conflicts with established UNC procedures were to come to light, the ROK would first fully consult the United Nations Command.

¶13. (C) Embassy and USFK officers present expressed appreciation to the DG Song, DG Cho and General Moon for the briefing they had provided, as well as for the ROK's willingness to firmly maintain its position on the NLL, U.S.-ROK combined military exercises and the presence of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula during its defense talks with the North. Acting DCM Yun added that since EAP Assistant Secretary Hill would be coming to Seoul on November 29 and

Washington was sure to also appreciate any assistance Defense Minister Kim could provide in pressing upon his North Korean counterpart the importance of full DPRK implementation of its commitments under the various Six-Party agreements.

¶14. (SBU) At the conclusion of the meeting both sides agreed that General Moon and DG Cho, who would accompany Defense Minister Kim to Pyongyang, would provide a debrief to the U.S.-ROK Senior Working Group on the outcome of the N-S DEFMIN talks as soon as possible after their return to Seoul.  
STANTON